



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

***Comments to the Michigan Senate Agriculture Committee
Regarding Changes to Siting GAAMPs
By Gail Philbin, Assistant Director, Michigan Sierra Club, May 15, 2014***

The Michigan Sierra Club appreciates the opportunity to speak before this committee on the recent changes to the Siting GAAMPs that removed Right to Farm protection for many urban and suburban farmers. We opposed those changes, and I've included a copy of our comments to the Michigan Agriculture Commission along with these comments to this committee.

The public outcry following the Michigan Agriculture Commission's action on April 28 shows that it touched a nerve. One of the hottest trends in food in Michigan is the public demand for access to more local, sustainable meat, dairy, poultry and eggs, and one sure way to get it is to grow your own. More people are returning to a practice common a century ago of raising a flock of chickens in the back yard for fresh eggs, for example, as the best way to ensure their families have safe, healthy food in an era of animal factories.

The Commission's action has also opened up an important and long overdue dialogue about our food system and what our priorities should be as we navigate a future of greater challenges to our water supply and increasingly volatile weather events. Do we want to put all our eggs in the factory farm basket, so to speak, with its resource-intensive practices that pollute our water, land and air? Or do we foster diversity, sustainability and independence by protecting the right of citizens to raise their own food if they choose?

The Michigan Sierra Club hopes that, as the committee looks into the issues raised by the recent GAAMPs changes, it recognizes that the people of Michigan want and deserve access to healthy, safe food. The desire is evidenced by the wild popularity of farmers markets and community supported agriculture around the state, and, yes, by the growing numbers of urban and suburban backyard farmers. We urge you to explore options that will protect these small but important pieces of our food system's future.

Thank you.